

Final script from "Adult Immunization Update" satellite broadcast, June 26, 2003.

Overview. Presented by Walter Orenstein, MD, Director, National Immunization program.

Hello. I'm Walt Orenstein, Director of the National Immunization Program at the CDC. I would like to welcome you to this Adult Immunization Update.

It's estimated that more than 40,000 adults die each year from three major vaccine-preventable diseases- influenza, pneumococcal infections and hepatitis B. In addition, measles, mumps, rubella, varicella, tetanus, diphtheria and hepatitis A cause substantial morbidity and some deaths among adults. Despite this tremendous health burden and the availability of safe and effective vaccines to help protect people from all these diseases, many adults remain at risk.

Many adults may have missed vaccinations in childhood. They may have entered school before school entry vaccination requirements were in place or they may have been lucky and not acquired the disease. Other adults enter special high-risk groups as a result of chronic medical conditions, occupation, lifestyle or advancing age, and require vaccines not routinely given in childhood. Other vaccines may be needed for special circumstances like travel to certain foreign countries.

One of our greatest public health challenges is expanding to the adult population the successes we've had in childhood immunization. Although progress has been made in recent years, adult immunization coverage levels remain well below the Healthy People 2010 goal of 90%. Racial and ethnic disparities in influenza and pneumococcal vaccination coverage rates continue to exist.

Our national strategy to improve adult immunization rates is multifaceted. The National Immunization Program supports activities that establish effective adult immunization policies and practices, remove barriers, provide technical information to providers, and educate the public. Through research, surveillance, and training and education, we continue to assess factors that affect the delivery of vaccines to adults. We are working with other agencies, such as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, consumer groups, and professional associations to enhance

knowledge about the benefits of vaccination. But it's you, the front line provider, who is at the heart of any effort to improve adult immunization rates. A health-care provider's recommendation is the single most important factor influencing whether a patient does or does not receive a vaccine. Every visit by an adult to a health-care provider is an opportunity to ensure that he or she is up to date with all appropriate vaccines. Progress is being made in our efforts to increase adult immunization. We hope that what you will learn from today's program will enable us to make even further progress. Thank you.